

## Soviet Immigrants and American Absorption Efforts: A Case Study in Detroit\*

Zvi Gitelman, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

*Because the class, educational, and linguistic differences which would have immediately set off one group from another in the USSR have disappeared, and all the immigrants are regarded as equally in need of help, as "refugees," it becomes all the more important for each immigrant to rescue his former status and keep it alive, at least within the immigrant group itself. If the unsophisticated American social worker can't tell the difference between the Leningrad accent of a scientist and the Latvian accent of a technician, the immigrants themselves certainly can. Thus, the immigrants will resist attempts to get them to "cooperate," to associate with and help people with whom they feel they have little in common. If we realize this, we might adopt subtle, differentiated approaches in dealing with the immigrants.*

Since 1971 over 23,000 Soviet immigrants have come to the United States, the great majority Jews. They constitute the single largest wave of Jewish immigrants since World War Two. Coming from a political, economic and even cultural-social system very different from our own and unknown to most Americans, they present some unique challenges—as well as opportunities—to those in the host society concerned with their absorption and integration. Obviously, never having worked for a private employer, never having paid school tuition or medical fees, and having enjoyed cheap public transportation, subsidized cultural events and job security, the Soviet immigrants face a shockingly different situation from that which they have always known as normal. Equally shocking is the freedom of expression found in the United States, pleasing to many, but unnerving in its pornographic and deviant expressions, and even in its seeming lack of respect for authority and office.

By now, most of those dealing directly with the Soviet immigrants have come to appreciate

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the importance of these background factors in shaping the expectations and behavior of the immigrants. However, we are still insufficiently aware of how heterogeneous a group Soviet Jews are, and how this reflects their adjustment in the United States. In fact, Soviet Jewry is far more heterogeneous than American Jewry. While there are few differences in dress, language, religious tradition, education, occupational structure or cultural habits between Los Angeles Jews and Boston Jews, those of, say, Georgia and Latvia differ in all of these—and often dramatically so.

The geo-cultural differences among Soviet Jews are relevant to immigrant resettlement not only because those from one region will differ in their values and Jewish consciousness from immigrants from another area. They will also differ in their vocational training and experience. We have learned that physicians in a large Leningrad hospital have been exposed to more sophisticated techniques and equipment than those who worked in small town polyclinics. Computer technicians in Moscow are likely to be more advanced than those from Kishinev. Moreover, different cultures produce different employment and housing patterns. European women work outside the home to a far greater extent than Central Asian or Georgian women; European Jews have very small families and live in apartments, while Asian and Georgian Jews have

larger families and often lived with other units of the extended family in one-story homes around a courtyard. Thus, geo-cultural variations influence the values and expectations of immigrants and are therefore relevant to resettlement.

There are three broad types of Soviet Jews: 1) those living in the Western borderlands (and, hence, known as *Zapadniki*, or "West-erners") of the USSR: the Baltic republics, West Ukraine, and Moldavia; 2) those living in the Slavic "heartland"—the RSFSR (Russia), the Ukraine, and Belorussia; 3) Georgian Jews, "Mountain Jews," and Central Asian, or *Bokharan* Jews.

Having come under Soviet rule relatively recently from states where Jewish religion and cultural life flourished right up to the outbreak of World War Two, the *Zapadniki* are more attached to Jewish identity and culture than "Heartlanders." Their acculturation and political socialization have been of shorter duration, and the percentage of Yiddish speakers among them is much higher. It is not accidental that the movement for *aliyah* in the 1960s started among them, especially in the Baltic capitals of Riga and Vilnius, and that roughly one-fourth of the Soviet immigration to Israel comes from the Baltic republics, though only about three percent of the Jews reside there. This figure is all the more striking in view of the fact that Baltic Jews make up only 3.6 percent of the immigration to America. This lends credence to the belief that they are motivated largely by Jewish considerations to emigrate.

There are significant differences among the various components of this "western" Jewry. While Baltic Jewry is basically secular, Yiddish in culture, and with a strong pre-war background of Jewish political activity, Moldavian Jewry, living in an area formerly part of Romania, is less urbanized, less educated, more religious and traditional, while Transcarpathian Jewry, located in what used to be easternmost Czechoslovakia, is Hungarian culturally, also less urbanized and educated,

and closer to religion. What is common to these groups is memory of non-Soviet political systems, of vibrant Jewish cultures, and of active Zionist and other Jewish political movements and parties. This memory leads more often to Jewish activity and to emigration than among other European Jews of the USSR.

By contrast, the "Heartlanders" are the furthest removed from Jewish tradition and culture. Many are third and even fourth generation Soviet citizens, and the last time any sort of Jewish school was available to them was about forty years ago. Having, for the most part, lost their Jewish culture, these people are both consumers and producers of Russian culture, and are the single most highly educated ethnic group in the USSR, occupying prominent roles in the Soviet scholarly, scientific, and cultural—but not political—establishments. Though they constitute 80 percent of the Soviet Jewish population, they have contributed only about 14 percent of the immigration to Israel (1971-1975), though their proportion among those leaving the USSR has risen constantly. They are impelled by political alienation, economic motivations, and a desire to escape restrictions on Jews, and so they constitute about 85 percent of those who immigrate to the United States and Canada, rather than to Israel.

In sharp contrast to both European groups are the Asian Jews. Like the *Zapadniki*, they include at least three distinct groups: Georgians, *Bukharans*, and "Mountain Jews." The Georgians are only about three percent of Soviet Jewry, but have made up about a quarter of the immigration to Israel. Georgian Jews are less educated than those in the European USSR, but are more community conscious. Their families are tightly knit, extended, and hierarchical, and this has played a large part in "snowballing" the emigration from Georgia. Motivated mainly by traditional Jewish values and visions of Zion, Georgian Jews have emigrated largely to Israel, and roughly half the Jews of Soviet

Georgia are to be found in Israel today.<sup>1</sup>

Like the Georgians, Bukharan Jews have a rich Jewish cultural tradition and a long history of Zionist activity and settlement in the Holy land (as do the Mountain Jews). Today there are about 20,000 recent Bukharan immigrants in Israel, largely from the less educated strata. Lacking the community cohesion and militancy of the Georgians, their adjustment to the Israeli economy and society has not been altogether smooth.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, a few thousand Mountain Jews, originating in Dagestan, have recently come to Israel. Largely rural until recent decades, the Mountain Jews have a long tradition of both persecution and militancy. This is a less educated group employed largely as skilled and unskilled workers, as well as in agriculture. There are very few Central Asian or Mountain Jews in the American immigration, and only a small number of Georgians. They are undoubtedly more comfortable with Israeli culture, and are more easily absorbed by the Israeli economy than they would be in the United States.

We cannot speak with as much certainty about the ideological and political physiognomy of Soviet Jewry, since we lack attitudinal surveys and other measures of social and political opinion. It is sufficient to note that the percentage of Jews among the much-publicized dissident movement is very high—out of all proportion to the number of Jews in even the urban and educated strata. On the other hand, there are almost 300,000 Jewish members of the Communist Party. They constitute 13.7 percent of the Jewish population—among the Russians, only 6.6 percent are Party members. While Jews are less than one percent of the Soviet population, they are

<sup>1</sup> For an anthropological study of a Georgian Jewish community in Israel, see Yitzhak Eilam, *Seker Antropologi Shel Hakenhila Hagruzinit BeAshkelon* (Jerusalem: Ministry for Immigrant Absorption, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> An anthropological study of the Bokharan immigrants in Israel is Rina Ben-Shaul's *Olai Bokhara—Beit Shemesh* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1975).

nearly two percent of the Party membership.<sup>3</sup> As the most urbanized and educated group in the entire country, Jews have a statistically better chance of being Party members (nearly a quarter of the Party membership has higher education, while only 5.5 percent of the general population does). Secondly, Party membership is a prerequisite for holding certain positions—director of a factory or a research institute, etc.—and many people join the Party not so much out of political conviction as to advance their professional careers. It must be remembered that Jews are very rarely to be found in the upper and even middle levels of the professional Party apparatus, strengthening the assumption that much of the Jewish membership is motivated by career considerations, on the one hand, and recruited because of the professional positions they hold, on the other. The point is that there is a pluralism of political attitudes and behavior among Soviet Jews. Their attitudes toward their position as Jews in Soviet society, towards Judaism, and towards Israel are both varied and complex.

It should now be obvious why we may find some Soviet immigrants viewing others with suspicion or even distaste and refusing to have much to do with each other. The Moscow intellectual may feel that he has nothing in common with the Georgian worker or even the Lithuanian hairdresser, except the accident of having lived under Soviet rule, and that such association is demeaning. In fact, we might expect these differences to be exaggerated in America. Because the class, educational, and linguistic differences which would have immediately set off one group from another in the USSR have disappeared, and all the immigrants are regarded as equally in need of help, as "refugees," it becomes all the more important for each immigrant to rescue his former status and keep it alive, at least within the immigrant group itself. If the unsophisticated American social worker can't tell the difference between the Leningrad accent of a

<sup>3</sup> The data are from "KPSS v tsifrakh," *Partiinaia zhizn'*, No. 10, May, 1976, p. 13.

scientist and the Latvian accent of a technician, the immigrants themselves certainly can. Thus, the immigrants will resist attempts to get them to "cooperate," to associate with and help people with whom they feel they have little in common. If we realize this, we might adopt subtle, differentiated approaches in dealing with the immigrants.

Similarly, American professionals, trained in Anglo-Saxon politeness and styles of interaction, often fail to realize how parochial is their notion of interpersonal and bureaucratic relations. Soviet immigrants may demand and shout, rather than request, but this is normal, accepted and even expected behavior for those coming from a culture where the relationship between official and citizen, between salesperson and buyer, is automatically assumed to be an adversary one. The official and the salesperson have power or a desired object, and will yield it grudgingly and reluctantly. Moreover, in a highly centralized system, clerks and officials have painfully little discretionary power, and the first instinct of the dissatisfied client is to "ask for the boss." The assumption that those with whom they deal are powerless clerks is transferred to the United States, so the frequent demands to "see your superior, the *nachal'nik*," should not come as a surprise. Perhaps it may be of some comfort to those working with immigrants that in the 1930s Molotov complained that the Party Politburo, its highest organ, was having to decide what size nails were to be used in a Siberian factory, as no one would assume responsibility for the decision and it was pushed all the way up the line.

#### Expectations and Fulfillment

Some who have worked with the immigrants feel they have unrealistically high expectations of a luxurious life in America. Since the Soviet media portray America negatively, one might ask whence these expectations derive? In the absence of empirical research, one can only speculate that it comes from memories of American movies shown in the USSR, or as a result of the reflex of some Soviet citizens

which leads them to believe the opposite of what the Soviet media present. Perhaps these expectations derive from experiences in Rome, or perhaps simply from a natural tendency to think of the country of immigration as a paradise on earth, something immigrants are prone to do, irrespective of country of origin or of destination. These expectations may be revised downward after the first few weeks in the United States, and then more realistic assessments may follow, punctuated, perhaps, by fits of depression and despair.

In the summer of 1976, with the aid of the University of Michigan's Center for Russian and East European Studies and the cooperation of the Jewish Family Service in Detroit, I conducted a survey among a random sample of 132 Soviet immigrants in the Detroit area. Among the issues investigated were immigrants' expectations of America and the fulfillment of those expectations. Nearly half the immigrants say their expectations of America have been fulfilled, and only 9 percent feel they have not. Thirty-one percent consider them partially fulfilled, and eleven percent are unable to say. Most immigrants gave political disaffection, anti-Semitism, family considerations, and desire for economic improvement as their motivations for emigrating. It is among those who emigrated primarily for family reasons that the greatest variance is observed in fulfillment of expectations. They also have the highest proportion unable to judge whether or not their expectations have been fulfilled. The politically alienated straddle the middle categories: the expectations of one third are partially fulfilled, of one half "more or less fulfilled" and of 13 percent completely fulfilled.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed examination of the motivations for immigration of the Detroit group, see Zvi Gitelman, "Soviet Jewish Emigrants: Why Are They Choosing America?" *Soviet Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Fall, 1977). For their views of the Soviet political system, see Gitelman, "Recent Emigres and the Soviet Political System: A Pilot Study in Detroit," *Slavic and Soviet Series* (Tel Aviv University), Vol. II, No. 1 (Fall, 1977).

Except in the case of the twelve people whose expectations were not fulfilled—where at least 8 of them earn less than \$400 a month—there is no relationship between income and fulfillment of expectations. This strengthens the supposition that relatively few emigrated primarily for economic reasons.

### Work

The immigrants are not altogether pleased with their present work in the United States.

### Satisfaction with Work<sup>5</sup>

	Detroit	East European Immigrants in Israel	Soviets Coming to Israel in 1972	1973
Very Satisfied	8.3%	33.8	37	27
Satisfied	19.7	18.8	35	35
Not Very Satisfied	17.4	4.0	18	25
Not at all Satisfied	15.2	Not reported (43.4?)	10	13
Don't Know	39.4	—	—	—

Though in Israel and Detroit the same questions were asked (in Russian), comparison is difficult because of the incompleteness of the 1969-70 Israeli data and the high percentage of "don't know" responses among the Detroiters. Apparently, many of the American immigrants are either unemployed, unsure about their satisfaction, or unwilling to "complain" to the interviewer.

From the 1972-73 Israeli data it may be inferred that satisfaction with work increases with time in the new country. We also observe

<sup>5</sup> Sources: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics—Supplement XXIV*, 9 (September, 1973), Table 5, p. 132 and Ministry for Immigrant Absorption, *Klitat olai Brih'm betashlag betom hashana harishona lealiyatam* (Jerusalem: November, 1974).

that after one year in Israel (this pertains to the 1973 group), their satisfaction is higher than that of the Detroit group, though, again, the higher percentage of "don't know" responses complicates the analysis greatly.

Even with the limitations of the Detroit data, it is apparent that, as in Israel, it is the better educated Soviets who have the most trouble finding suitable and satisfactory employment. They are more dissatisfied with work than the less educated, and their dissatisfaction arises primarily from the fact that they are not working in their own fields, and, connected with this, some see their wages as too low. The most severe problems are encountered by medical doctors, but, unlike in some other American cities, engineers and technicians have managed to find suitable employment.

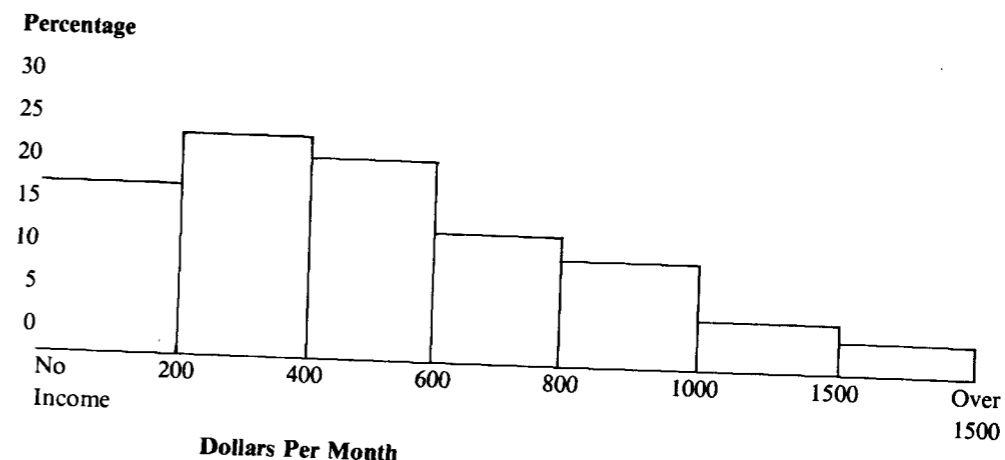
While only 17 of the 62 women did not work in the USSR, in America 32 women are not working. Among working males and females, the latter are somewhat more satisfied, perhaps because their expectations were lower and they could more easily find work in their less skilled and less specialized fields.

The immigrants remain sanguine about the future. Almost all of them hope to work in those fields in which they worked in the USSR, and some aspire to somewhat higher or different positions. One factory worker expressed it this way: "I would like to have my own business. My dream is to sell liquor." A few of the women who were in low-level white collar positions in the USSR are content to be housewives in the United States, indicating that their work in the USSR was perceived as a necessity, not a means of "self-fulfillment."

### Income

The immigrants are, naturally, concentrated in the lower income groups. One quarter report a monthly income of \$400 or less, and another 21 percent earn between \$400 and \$600. Fully 17.4 percent report no income at all. These are people being supported by the Jewish Family Service for six months and more, until they become self-supporting.

Monthly Income in Detroit



The *Zapadniki* report significantly higher incomes than the Heartlanders. While two-thirds of the Heartlanders (and five of seven Asians) earn less than \$800 per month, only half the *Zapadniki* are in this bracket; while 17 percent of the Heartlanders earn nothing at all, only 8 percent of the *Zapadniki* are still financially dependent on the JFS. This picture is confirmed by the finding that the *Zapadniki* possesses more consumer goods than the Heartlanders, and the difference between the two groups is greater in the U.S. than it was in the USSR. For example, 83 percent of the *Zapadniki*, but only 39 percent of the Heartlanders, possesses washing machines; a higher proportion of *Zapadniki* possesses every other durable item, including automobiles. There is no significant difference in consumer durable possession between the less and more educated, and since the *Zapadniki* arrived at roughly the same time as the Heartlanders, their higher incomes and greater possession of durables cannot be explained by the fact that they have had a longer time than Heartlanders "to work themselves up." Perhaps they benefit from the fact that they have more close relatives in the U.S., and these relatives help them out financially or provide them with some appliances.

### Percentage Possessing<sup>6</sup>

Item	Detroit	E. European Immigrants After 2 Yrs. in Israel	Israel Immigrants after 1 Yr. in Israel
Refrigerator	74.2*	99.5	—
Tape Recorder	35.6	18.1	16
Phonograph	53.0	21.7	—
Washer	52.0	—	44
Car/Van	77.3**	27.1	13
TV	81.1	72.5	82

As was the case in the USSR, women earn less than men in the USA. Nearly a quarter of the women have no independent income at all, and of the 42 income-earning women, exactly half make less than \$400 a month, while of the 59 working men, only 11 (19%) fall into this category. More and less educated immigrants fall pretty much into the same income cate-

<sup>6</sup> Sources: Monthly Bulletin, *op. cit.*, Table 9, pp. 136-7; and *Klitat Haaliyah*, 1975 (Jerusalem, 1976) p. 125.

\*Most immigrants live in apartments equipped with a refrigerator and many feel they don't "own" one because it "belongs" to the apartment.

\*\*A car is much more of a necessity in the U.S., especially in Detroit.

gories, largely because the more educated have not yet been able to find work in their specific fields at the professional level that they occupied in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, some have begun to do so, and this is reflected in the fact that while only 12 percent of the less educated earn more than \$800 a month, over a quarter of the better educated are in this income bracket.

It is worth remarking that a higher proportion of those who were dissatisfied in the Soviet Union have consumer durables in the U.S. This may be of some influence on their reported satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the USSR: those who now possess certain items remember the USSR less favorably than those who do not yet possess these items in the United States. The same type of pattern is seen in regard to American income. A somewhat higher percentage of those who say they were basically satisfied with Soviet life have no income or a low income in the United States.

#### Housing

Housing is provided initially by the Jewish Family Service in Detroit. Most immigrants are given apartments in three areas in the suburbs of Detroit, where their rent is subsidized for several months, and furniture is provided. As in Israel, Soviet immigrants are by and large satisfied with the housing provided.

#### Satisfaction with Housing<sup>7</sup>

	1969-70 Immigrants in Israel 2 Years		1970 Immigrants to Israel from E. Europe	
	Detroit	After Arrival	Detroit	After 2 Years
Satisfied, Fairly Satisfied, More/Less Sat.	87.1%	87%	Higher in USA/Israel Stayed the same Was lowered in USA/Israel Don't Know	49.2 15.2 12.1 22.0
Not so Satisfied Not at all Satisfied	10.6	13		54 20 27 —
Don't Know	2.3	—		

<sup>7</sup> Source: Monthly Bulletin, *Ibid*, Table 8, p. 135.

The better educated Detroit immigrants are less satisfied than the less educated: whereas 6 percent of the less educated are not satisfied, 19 percent of the educated are dissatisfied. This may well be due to the better housing the educated enjoyed in the USSR, so that the contrast with American housing is not so sharp. This is borne out by the explicit comparison made. One quarter of the better educated say their Soviet housing was better than the American and 40 percent said it was about the same, while only 17 percent of the less educated said Soviet housing was superior, and only 24 percent saw it as equal to American housing. It should be borne in mind that the housing provided by the JFS is of uniform quality, so that a levelling occurs among the immigrants, and the better educated may be aware that their status differential has disappeared.

#### Perceived Standard of Living

Half the immigrants perceive their standard of living as having risen in the transition from the USSR to the USA, despite the fact that in many ways they are "starting all over," and "starting from the bottom." Nevertheless, they are acutely aware that though their standard of living may have risen, it is lower than that of most other Americans.

#### Change in Standard of Living<sup>8</sup>

	Detroit	After 2 Years
Higher in USA/Israel	49.2	54
Stayed the same	15.2	20
Was lowered in USA/Israel	12.1	27
Don't Know	22.0	—

Again, the high percentage of those unable to judge among Detroit respondents makes comparison somewhat difficult, but it is clear

<sup>8</sup> Source: *Klilat Haaliyah*, 1972, (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 20.

that among both groups there is a rise in standard for most people. However, a significant minority (19 percent) of the more educated Detroit immigrants feel their standard of living was *lowered* in the U.S., though 49 percent of both the more and less educated think their standard of living rose. Also, 22 percent of those who were generally satisfied in the USSR say their standard fell in the move to America, while only 5 percent of those dissatisfied in the USSR feel this way, raising the possibility of a projection *backwards* to the USSR from discontent in the U.S. On the other hand, it is perfectly plausible that those who were satisfied in the USSR felt this way precisely because they had a relatively high standard of living.

While half the immigrants consider their standard of living in the U.S. higher than that in the USSR, an equal proportion perceive their American standard as *below* the American average. Males, Heartlanders and better educated immigrants have the strongest perception of having a lower standard of living than the average American.

#### Social Class

This realistic assessment of their relative position in society is confirmed by their self-assignment to social class in America. Over two-thirds of the immigrants classify themselves as working class or lower class, and while most Americans think of themselves as "middle class," only 19 percent of the immigrants assign themselves to this category. A comparison between self-assigned social class in the USSR and USA illustrates that the immigrants see themselves as having lost considerable social status and having changed their class, with some people unable to define their class in the U.S.

It is striking that a higher proportion of the better educated feel themselves lower class in the U.S., perhaps because of the more radical change in their occupational and—no less important—cultural status.

#### Self-Ascribed Social Class in USSR and USA

	USSR	USA
Working Class	31.8	45.5
Intelligentsia	42.4	—
Lower Class	0.8	21.2
Middle Class	20.5	18.9
Other	1.5	0.8
Don't Know/No Answer	3.0	12.8

#### Identification as Jews

One of the questions of interest to the Jewish community at large is the degree to which Soviet immigrants identify as Jews once they are resettled. We have very little information on this. In Detroit, we did inquire about the immigrants' synagogue attendance in the USSR and in the U.S. There is considerable change in synagogue attendance habits when the immigrants come to America.

#### Attendance at Synagogue

	USSR	USA
Often (frequently)	8.3	11.4
Sometimes	37.9	43.2
Rarely	—	20.5
Never	52.3	19.7

We should not be misled into thinking that most of the immigrants had suppressed religious tendencies in the USSR and are now able to give them free expression. This is true of a few individuals, but the great majority have gone to synagogue in the U.S. mainly out of curiosity, and because of pressure or invitations by local American Jews. Whereas in the USSR social stigma attached to synagogue attendance, some American Jews seem to expect Soviet immigrants to rush to the synagogues and the immigrants realize this. Moreover, many American families invite the immigrants to their synagogues and homes for the High Holidays and Passover. This explains the radical decline in the proportion

who "never" go to synagogue as well as the lesser increase in more frequent attendance. The Soviet immigrants may fall into the typical American pattern of synagogue attendance three or four times a year.

#### Jewish Family Service

In contrast to Israel, immigrant absorption in the U.S. is almost exclusively a non-governmental function. The personnel of the agencies dealing with the immigrants in America are mainly social workers and guidance and vocational counsellors, rather than civil servants with no specific vocational training, as is the case in Israel (where social workers are a small proportion of those dealing with immigrants). On the other hand, very few of these American professionals know Russian or have more than the most superficial acquaintance with the Soviet background and system from which the immigrants come.

In Detroit, the Jewish Family Service has overall charge of the immigrants, and then assigns them to other services as the need arises. Each immigrant family is assigned a caseworker. It is likely that over 90 percent of the Soviet immigrants, even those moving from other U.S. cities, will have contact with the JFS.

There is no doubt that, for many immigrants, the relationship with the JFS is not a comfortable one. The relationship is one of dependence, especially difficult for those who had a relatively high status in Soviet life. The immigrants naturally transfer Soviet ways of dealing with bureaucracies and bureaucrats, and their confrontationist style quickly alienates—or at least puzzles—the American social worker. The Jewish agencies are often perceived as government agencies, and the attitude toward them develops accordingly. There is, therefore, the possibility that mutual distrust and misunderstanding develop between social worker and immigrant. With time, each is learning the ways of the other, and it is likely that the relationship will become more comfortable, though the inequality of

power and dependence intrinsic to it—the very word "client" signals this—militates against a completely relaxed relationship.

In Detroit, respondents were informed by the JFS that we would be asking them for interviews, and though both the JFS and the interviewers took great pains to emphasize that the JFS did not sponsor the interviews, some respondents may have perceived the interviewers as emissaries of the JFS. This would have influenced their response to our enquiry as to their satisfaction with JFS services. Respondents were asked whether they were satisfied or not with the assistance they had received from JFS. Fully seventy percent responded affirmatively, ten percent negatively, and 17 percent said they were "more or less" satisfied.

The less educated were somewhat more satisfied, probably because their vocational absorption had been easier. Interestingly, satisfaction with the JFS was greatest among those at opposite ends of the income spectrum. Those who have *no* American income were satisfied, as were those who have a relatively *high* income; it is the group with the *low* incomes that is least satisfied. This is because those without income receive JFS financial assistance, while those with higher incomes (over \$800 a month) see themselves as having been helped on their way to earning a reasonable wage. Those with the low incomes, on the other hand, no longer receive JFS assistance, but do not earn very much on their own, and would like to continue getting some assistance. They are, therefore, the least satisfied with the Family Service.

#### Attitudes Toward and Assessments of Life in the United States

Respondents were quite ready to detail what troubles them about life in the United States generally, and in Detroit in particular, though almost twenty percent—all of them less educated—could think of "nothing" that disturbed them about life in the U.S. Though Detroit's population is approximately 60 percent Black, very few immigrants mentioned

any problems they had with this population, perhaps because most of them live in areas where the Black population is relatively small. Detroit is sometimes referred to as "the murder capital of the world"—there are more murders per capita in that city than in any other—and quite a few respondents mention crime and fear of walking the streets as serious problems. One respondent suggested that "Detroit needs Soviet order (*poriadok*) for several months." While a substantial number of less educated are disturbed mostly by the difficulty of learning English, among the more educated there are complaints of the low level of culture, and the latter is connected also with what they consider to be the provincial character of Detroit. "Detroit is a village. There is no (public) transportation. A dead town." Or, as another put it, "I miss the pace of life in Moscow. Here it's like in the countryside on vacation."

A frequent complaint is that people in Detroit are not to be seen on the streets, but only in their cars and homes. Secondly, they are not as warm, friendly, and sociable as Soviet people. Interestingly, this bothers the better educated more than the less educated. Having thought of America as a land of skyscrapers, they are surprised at finding "one-story America." A young man said with some passion that "life here is in home-fortresses or in individual automobiles. Perhaps this is peculiar to Detroit, but I can't meet a girl without an automobile. She's in a car, I'm in a car, what kind of business is that?" (It should be noted that in this young fellow's family, which consists of three adults, there are two automobiles, so we assume he will do alright with the girls). People complain about the lack of public transportation limiting their visits to friends and relatives. They are disappointed that Americans do not stroll the streets. "There's no socializing, transportation. Everything is closed up, you can't go anywhere on foot. Americans sit at home."

A few observe that they have to work harder in the United States than in the USSR. One

complained about the lack of *biuletenty* (sick excuses). "Such a rich country and it doesn't give the working class a chance!" Another said "work, work, work . . . it's not very interesting."

While mentioning these disquieting aspects of their new lives, many hasten to add that they are quite pleased with the political freedom and high standard of living that they have found.

Asked what they miss from the Soviet Union, more than half mention friends and relatives, while 15 percent claim they miss nothing at all. Among the better educated, various aspects of Soviet culture are mentioned, and some return to earlier themes, citing public transport and social life, or the feeling of safety in the streets.

Nevertheless, 42 percent of the respondents claim that there is "nothing" that the United States could learn from the USSR. Those who do see America benefitting from Soviet examples, and these are mostly better educated, emphasize discipline and order, and social services, especially free higher education and medical services. They recommend instituting the death penalty, "taking hooligans in hand," and disciplining youth ("I never saw naked young girls on the street in the USSR, and here—just look around, no shame, no morals, no culture.") One recommended that Americans "not wash their dirty linen in public. All Soviet officials have mistresses supported by public funds, but here everything is published and becomes known to enemies of the system." (This remark was made when Congressman Wilbur Mills' escapades were being widely reported in the press.)

#### Summary

What emerges from the Detroit study is a picture of basically satisfied immigrants who are neither blindly enthusiastic about their new country, nor, for the most part, blindly negative toward their old one. Despite the fact that they are at the lower rungs of the economic ladder, the immigrants are hopeful

about their vocational and economic future and feel that they have made a definite improvement in their standard of living. They are surprised and disappointed at the provincialism of Detroit life, at what they see as its low cultural levels. They are disappointed also in the social styles of Americans, their tendency to live their social lives not on the streets, but in the home. They are frightened and angered—as are the great majority of Americans—by crime on the streets, and they are dismayed at the relative lack of public transport, despite the fact that most of them have their own cars. There is some hesitancy and ambivalence about American individual and social freedom, and a minority would like to see some more public order and discipline—as would many Americans. Both their basic adjustment combined with their criticisms

should be heartening to the host society, for they indicate that this will not be a problematic population, and, yet, for a while at least, it will retain a healthy critical perspective which should benefit both immigrants and host population.

But many important questions are as yet unanswered. We need to know much more about the immigrants' expectations of America, their expectations and evaluations of the resettlement agencies, their socialization—or lack thereof—into the general American community and its Jewish sub-culture. Research into these questions is needed both to make absorption efforts more efficient and effective, as well as to serve the larger interests of the American Jewish and general communities.